

Metro examines 'reverse commute' bus use

Price of D.C.-Dulles route may rise to reduce subsidies local governments pay

By **HEATHER GREENFIELD**
Associated Press

The number of riders using a "reverse commute" bus to jobs in Northern Virginia is growing, but Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority board members want to know who is using it.

The 5A Bus service, which started last year, was designed to bring Washington, D.C., residents to technology jobs in Herndon and around Dulles International Airport.

At a Metro budget committee meeting Thursday, board members questioned whether many of the 800 weekday riders

are commuters using the subsidized express bus service to go from a Park and Ride lot in Herndon to Washington, rather than the other way around.

A staff summary said Metro believes about 25 percent are using the bus service to commute to Washington. But other numbers show the bus may be more full on the regular commute than the reverse commute route.

The express bus route takes passengers from the L'Enfant Plaza Metro station in Washington or the Rosslyn Metro station in Arlington to Dulles Airport or the Herndon-Monroe Park and Ride.

"It's cheaper to get on this bus and com-

mute on this bus, and that's what 25 percent of our riders are doing," said Metro board member Katherine K. Hanley, who represents Fairfax County and is chairwoman of that county's Board of Supervisors.

The bus costs \$1.10, and Metro is proposing turning it into a regional route and charging \$2 per trip. That would ease the amount of subsidies paid by jurisdictions such as Arlington County, Fairfax County and Prince George's County, Md.

But board members balked at making any decision on the bus route until staff does a survey to find out who is using the service and where they are going. Metro

will survey riders and report back at a meeting May 9.

"I agree with the concern to provide reverse commute ridership, but I don't see in these numbers that that's what we're doing," Hanley said.

Hanley said the growing use of this bus service indicates a need for better transit to the Dulles corridor, and asked staff to consider running a Metro bus from the West Falls Church-VT/UVA Metro station to Dulles.

"If there is a better way to provide the service, we would be happy to do it. But this is the most expensive way," Hanley said.